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REV. ARTHUR O'LEARY'S

ADDRESS

TO THE

LORDS SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL

OF THE

PARLIAMENT OF GREAT BRITAIN:

TO WHICH IS ANNEXED,

AN ACCOUNT OF

SIR HENRY MILDMA'S

BILL

RELATIVE TO NUNS.

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TO THE
LORDS SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL
IN THE
PARLIAMENT OF GREAT BRITAIN,
THE
MOST HUMBLE ADDRESS
OF THE
REV. ARTHUR O'LEARY.

MY LORDS,

WHEN I have the honour to address the most august Assembly on earth, and under the impression which injured honour must feel from an unmerited and horrid accusation that implies whatever can disgrace the human heart, and changes a Christian Clergyman into an Infernal Being, even before he is stripped of the spoils of mortality, I cannot be ignorant of the delicacy of my situation, lest conscious but defenceless rectitude should tempt me, even in the most agitated frame of mind, to make use of any unguarded word, which, though inadvertently, may give the slightest offence.

But in bringing the complaints of injured honour into the sanctuary of honour itself, I claim your Lordships' indulgence if I presume to introduce myself under the designation which points out my person and character, to such members of your illustrious body as I have not the honour of being known to.

I am a Catholic Clergyman, a native of Ireland, well known in that kingdom for having inculcated loyalty to my Sovereign, and subordination to the laws, in the most critical times, by my writings, my sermons, and example. For the truth of this assertion I could refer to the speeches delivered in the Irish House of Commons on a former occasion, and to the kingdom at large. Nor was my loyalty the effect of imperious necessity, or time-serving policy; for in France, where in consequence of barbarous and Gothic laws, I was forced in my early days to seek for a small portion of that education which I had been refused in the land of my fathers, where the youth of Europe had been instructed gratis, in the time of Ireland's splendor. In France, where the Catholics of Ireland had seminaries and convents, with full admission to all the degrees and honours of her Universities, I resisted every solicitation to enlist any of the subjects of these kingdoms in the French King's service, though I had then every opportunity, being appointed to superintend prisons and hospitals, during the wars of fifty-seven, &c. until about the arrival of the then Duke of Bedford in Paris. It was my interest to recommend myself to the favour of people in power, and consequently, more my interest to become a courtier than a moralist. Saint Paul calls God to witness when he asserts the truth, I can do the same when I assert that conscience was the rule of my conduct; and, whatever the uninformed may think of my creed, I would not perjure myself for all the Crowns and Sceptres on earth.

Thus far I thought it incumbent on me to say something of myself, in order to shew that not a single feature in my character corresponds with
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the picture, of the exhibition whereof, I have such room to complain. I have taken the oath of allegiance to his Majesty with the rest of the Catholic Clergy of Ireland. As then we are amenable to Government, and fulfil our part of the covenant, we think ourselves entitled to the protection of the laws both as to our persons and honour. Our persons have been hitherto secure from insult. How long they may be so is uncertain, if the public can believe that we answer the description given of us in a short publication to which the editor has prefixed the name of a very considerable person, who is presumed to know the state of Ireland, or who ought to know it better. For if our lineaments bear even the slightest resemblance to the portrait he is said to have drawn, we ought to be swept from society as serpents horrid to sight, and pests deadly to human nature. And as to honour, if what this publication sets forth be true, we have by far less claim to it than the Cartouches, or Bagshots. For, the publication, after enlarging upon the *civilization* and other happy effects of the *Union of Ireland with Great Britain*, reckons, amongst others, the following remarkable one: "*It will entice the Clergy to more constant residence, by which means the pernicious influence of the vagrant Catholic Priest, who goes about selling absolutions for felonies, and all sorts of crimes, even murder itself, would be lessened, and in a great measure done away.*"

Horrid and barbarous accusation! which describes the Catholic Priests of Ireland as the most detestable of the human race, venders of sacrilege, profanation, murder and felony; and their flocks as so many licensed criminals and patentees of guilt, in purchasing their absolutions for the perpetration of the most horrid deeds. *The*
vagrant

vagrant Catholic Priests selling absolutions for felonies, all sorts of crimes, even murder.

I am as great a friend to the Union, and have reconciled, I believe, as many to it, as the person to whom the publication is attributed. I am a friend to it from, as I imagined, a well-founded expectation, that it will close the tumultuary scenes which have distracted my ill-fated country for ages; and make the natives, of every religious description, happy: a people *united*, not in a league against Great Britain, but *united* with her and amongst themselves in interest, prosperity and power; by a free and equal participation of all benefits and advantages arising in the state, and by the removal of those jealousies which ever subsist between kingdoms or states, standing in the same relation to each other as England has stood hitherto with respect to Ireland—the one subordinate to the other, and governed by viceroys, and both but half united. Divisions, jealousies, and their concomitant evils, must be the natural consequence. Such was the state of Norway, with regard to Denmark, until united. Such was the state of Portugal with regard to Spain, and of Flanders with regard to Austria, until separated. And such would be the state of Ireland with regard to England, until wedded together in the bands of a close and intimate union; or divorced from each other by a solemn and irrevocable deed of separation. For the calamities of Ireland are not originally and radically owing to difference in religious opinions. The kingdoms and states above-mentioned professed the same creed. There is nothing unsociable in the character of Irishmen, any more than in the character of Germans; amongst whom, in some places, Lutherans, Calvinists, and Catholics perform their

their respective worship, on Sundays, in the same church. Amidst such a multiplicity of penal laws, some of which persecuted the dead body to the grave, in forbidding, under certain penalties, to bury any Catholic in the ruins of any old abbey, though built ages before by his ancestors; no Catholic could scarce have breathed outside the bars of a jail, had it not been for the liberality of our Protestant neighbours, who were too generous to enforce them. All the liberal-minded Protestants in Ireland are for the emancipation of the Catholics to this very day. And such as are under any bias now, would soon give up their prejudices, or rather, would never have indulged any, if the law had made no distinction.

Long before the magic sound of *Protestant and Papist*, like the Trojan trumpet, had given the signal to marshal them, as hostile armies against each other, on account of their creeds—an insidious and destructive policy was at a loss how to divide the natives of Ireland, after they had sheathed the sword, and coalesced into one extensive and friendly family. It had not then the plea of difference of religion, for their religion was the same; nor the plea of interest, for it is the interest of the inhabitants of the same land to live in peace and harmony. At last it compassed, by playing on the passions, what it could not have effected by either religion or interest.

The Irish nobility and gentry of the Milesian race wore long beards, in which they gloried; the Government of that time got an act of parliament passed, called the *Glib Act*; whereby every Irish nobleman, of English or Norman extraction, was to forfeit the privileges of his original country if he did not shave the upper lip. Thus the

the warlike fools renewed the bloody contest, for the splitting of a hair, with as much fury as the two famous factions, in the reign of Justinian, quarrelled on account of the colour of their clothes; or, as the sectaries of Ali and Omar fight, to this very day, about the orthodox cut that should be given to a Mahometan's beard. And I consider such of the Protestants and Catholics of Ireland full as great fanatics and fools as the former, if their creed be the cause of their quarrel; not that I am such a latitudinarian as to believe all religions alike. But true religion, instead of inspiring hatred and rancour, commands us to love and pity those who are in error.

The fleecy beard, and the *glib* or smooth lip, were both forgotten a few years after the Reformation, in the appellation of *Protestant* and *Papist*; and thus the same sanguinary system has been continued, with few interruptions, for too long a time, to the destruction of a kingdom, which, from its happy situation, the commodiousness of its harbours, the temperature of its climate, the fertility of its soil, the manly and generous dispositions of its inhabitants, would realize whatever poets have feigned concerning Fortunate Islands, and Hesperian Gardens. To do away the jealousy which may hereafter operate to the same destructive effect, by playing off the natives against each other, to their mutual provocation and obstruction to the happiness and prosperity of their common country, was the chief motive which influenced my mind in recommending *the Union*, as the only effectual preventive.

As to the happy effect of the Union, by making the residence of the clergy a check on the *pernicious influence of the vagrant Catholic priest, who sells his absolutions for all sorts of crimes*: it is as fancifully

fancifully imagined, as it is *delicately* expressed. The parson hereby assumes the office of an exciseman to seize the *contraband absolutions* of the priest, who becomes a smuggler—a well conceived plan for increasing the revenues of Ireland, and refining the *manners* of her inhabitants! The Protestant and Catholic Clergy of Ireland have lived together, for years, in the habits of freedom and friendship; when, by the laws of the country, the latter were doomed to transportation for performing their religious functions, the clergy of the established church never turned informers, *nor applied to members of Parliament, for the purpose of swelling with new laws, the enormous penal code, on account of literary disputes.* It is not from each other they have anything to fear. But both have every thing to dread from the disciples of the New Philosophy, which has made a rapid progress amongst their respective flocks. At the root of this system, and not against any branch of the Christian religion, which professes obedience to the laws, the axe of power should be laid; and nothing cherishes the growth of infidelity more than publications which tend to expose the pastors to the derision and contempt of those who were accustomed, and whose duty it was, to respect them.

It is needless to have recourse to France, where the *priests'* cassock began to be considered by the higher orders as an antiquated dress; and the lower classes, who afterwards burnt the castles, and shed the blood of these nobles, learned disrespect for their teachers from their example. Ireland has of late afforded but too melancholy an instance of the truth of this remark. The habit of respect and submission to their clergy, was in such a manner an earnest pledge of the obedience

of the common people to the state, that amidst so many wars and rebellions, since the Revolution, until the destruction of monarchy in France, Ireland was not one single hour tainted with the spirit of rebellion. Lord Chesterfield, on his return from his viceroyship, informed George II. that he had met in Ireland but *two dangerous Papists*, of whom *his Majesty should be aware*,—two ladies of the names of Devereux, who had danced at the Castle on the King's birth night. All the Viceroys of Ireland, from Lord Chesterfield to Earl Camden, could have made much a similar answer, if interrogated concerning what is called *the danger of Popery*.

If a number of the common people, in some counties, were seduced from the peaceable line of conduct, which they had hitherto pursued, the chief cause will, as it ought to be, ascribed to their disobedience to their pastors; in consequence of the industrious propagation of Tom Paine's *pernicious* principles, and the artifices of people of power and consequence, of a religion, if any they had, different from the Catholic persuasion. Other collateral causes can be assigned, which it is the province of the impartial historian to detail, when he lays open the hidden springs of public transactions. But means were used to weaken the confidence of the people in their pastors, by representing them as so many impostors, leagued with government for their oppression*.

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* This is so true, that the United Irishmen universally execrate the Catholic Clergy, as concurring both to disunite and prevent any accession of strength, by their sermons and pastoral instructions: and impute partly the frustration of their plans to these very priests, so cruelly libelled by others, from whom more candour and justice might be expected. The clergy of both religions

In the American war, when the combined fleets of France and Spain, were riding triumphant in the British channel, almost all the English forces engaged beyond the Atlantic, and Ireland destitute of any regular defence, except a few dismounted dragoons, the loyal and peaceable conduct of the common people, attentive to the instructions of their pastors, could be equalled only by the union and exertions of the higher orders for the protection of the kingdom.

Many instances could I adduce, in which the peaceful voice of the priest was more effectual to quell riots and disturbances, than the thunder of the cannon could have been. In proportion as *this influence is weakened* in a kingdom situated as Ireland is, the spirit of insubordination and infidelity will strengthen. Remove the restraints of religion, from men of strong passions, irritable dispositions, and desperate courage—Let the *influence of their priests be destroyed*, they will become infidels. The kingdom will be then chiefly divided between the Infidels of the South, who will have no religion, and the Dissenters of the North, whose religion breathes freedom and independence on hierarchial government.

The maxim laid down by Doctor Law, a Protestant bishop, equally eminent for learning and liberality, is by far more consistent with Christianity and sound policy. *By far the greatest part of my diocesans, said this illustrious prelate, are of the Roman Catholic persuasion. I cannot make good Protestants of them, I wish to make good Catholics of them; and with this intention I put into their hands* the

religions must stand or fall together. In all appearance, had the rebellion succeeded, there would be none but Constitutional Priests and Ministers, as immoral as their Republican flocks,

the works of Doctor Gother, an eminent Catholic divine.

If Doctor Law's maxim be followed—if, instead of having the people eternally harassed on the score of religion, every one rests in peace under his own vine and fig-tree, a Catholic priest, respected by his flock, will be a safer guard to a Protestant clergyman, than a regiment of the best disciplined soldiers.

Let us uncatholicise France, said Mirabeau; *otherwise we can never establish a Republican government.* It is then much safer for the state to continue the Catholic Catechism in the hands of the common people, who are accustomed to it, than to expose them to the danger of having Tom Paine's *Age of Reason* substituted in its room. And his Majesty will be more secure on his throne, when a Catholic clergyman recommends him and the Royal Family to God, from the altar, than when a fifth-monarchy man, after reading in his bible, *thou shalt bind their kings in chains, and their nobles in fetters of iron,* acknowledges no king but *King Jesus*; or, when regicides inscribe on the muzzles of their guns, *Lord, thou wilt open my lips, and my mouth shall sing forth thy praise.*—The history of England affords but too many melancholy proofs of it.

As to the blessings of *civilization* which are to be extended to Ireland by the *Union*, any insinuation, that the Irish stand in need of it more than their neighbours, must hurt their pride.

I suppose he means the lower orders of the people of Ireland. All philosophical and unprejudiced travellers, who have observed with attention their customs and manners, acknowledge that they surpass the lower orders of any other country, in generosity, wit, vivacity, manliness and civility. It

is not at St. Giles, or Wapping, where their manners and morals are vitiated by the contagion of example, that the character of the lower orders of the Irish is to be known. It is in the inland and mountainous parts of Ireland, where barefooted boys study the classics; and where the civility of the common people to strangers, and to each other, distinguishes them as much from Dutch boors, and the rustics of other countries, as education distinguishes a well-bred man from a clown. It is not *civilization*, but bread and employment they stand in need of. And if it be true, that language and music were the first civilizers that softened the savage manners of unpolished man; it seems, from the *inharmonious style* of the author of a publication, which identifies, by a grammatical apposition, a *Catholic priest* and a *vagrant*—that he has not such a stock of *civilization* to spare, as to be enabled to divide it with others without impoverishing himself. Though his rank in life entitles him to range in those circles, one of whose first rules is that of *good breeding*, if the name which the editor has prefixed to the publication be not fictitious.

The Catholic clergy of Ireland, my Lords, are not *vagrants*. They claim their descent from the most ancient and noble families in that kingdom; and, though pride of birth attaches no consequence either to their persons or profession, in the eyes of the patrons of *liberty and equality*, yet it must have weight with your Lordships. For in Monarchies, where, according to Montesquieu, there must be gradations of ranks, and nobles, like your Lordships, whose titles and privileges are descendable to their posterity, a certain regard must be paid to lineage and pedigree; and if the day should ever happen (which heaven

heaven avert) when the gentleman should be confounded with the clown, and *the priest with the vagrant*, away with the coronet and the armorial bearings. My name is *Equality*, said the late Duke of Orleans. The unhappy man prophesied! — His head fell, with *equal honour*, from the edge of the guillotine into the same basket with the head of the *sans-culotte*. If then the author of the worse than illiberal publication, alluded to in this address, be that man of consequence, whose name the editor has prefixed to it, he forgets himself, and the regard due to dignity of rank, and the rules of common decency, when he treats gentlemen of family, and of a liberal education, such as the Catholic clergy of Ireland, with millions of times less ceremony than it would be in his power to treat a pilfering crew of strolling gipsies, — *The vagrant Catholic priest, selling his absolutions for all sorts of crimes, felonies, &c. &c.*

The ancestors, my Lords, of the Catholic clergy of Ireland, had the religion which the Christian world professed, and the estates and castles of their fathers, ages before Tudors or Stuarts had ascended the British throne. From the contemporary historians of their own and of other nations, and ancient monuments, daily rescued from ruins and watery wastes, their character must be drawn; not from Hume, and similar historians, as unfaithful in their narratives with regard to Ireland, as they are infidels with regard to Revelation.

Amidst the various changes that happened in Europe, the descendants of those Catholics preserved their religion, which persecution contributed to rivet deeper into their minds; as, the more the wind attempted to strip the traveller of his cloak, the closer he held it. But their estates
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and castles they lost, rather than renounce their duty to God, and their allegiance to their kings; one of whom had the base ingratitude to confirm to Cromwell's soldiers, tinged with his royal father's blood, the lands of the nobility and gentry who had fought his father's battles and his own*.

In addition to our losses under the usurpation of Cromwell, and subsequent ones at the Revolution, our most invaluable privileges were swept away at a political game of hazard, played by Whigs and Tories, under the last of the Stuarts, without the slightest provocation on our part. For the laws framed in Queen Anne's reign against the Catholics of Ireland, are of so horrid a complexion, that it was never the intention of those who devised them to have them enacted—their very cruelty was the only motive for inventing them.

Queen Anne, whose father had been a mendicant, supported by the generosity of a foreign king, was suspected of wishing that her brother, a Catholic prince, should succeed her. The party, to whom her ministers were obnoxious, intended to draw on them the odium of purposing to place the Pretender on the throne. With this view, they framed a code of laws, authorising the neighbour to plunder the neighbour, the brother to supplant the brother, and the profligate son to strip the father of his estate and to make him tenant for life, only by taking an oath of abjuration; with a variety of other penal clauses equally cruel and unjust. The very severity of laws, clashing with those of God and nature, gave them every room to believe that they would be opposed

* The wills and deeds of numbers of these forfeitures are deposited in the British Museum.

opposed by the court party, from principles of humanity and justice. And thus they flattered themselves with the success of an expedient, calculated to expose their opponents to the hatred entertained at the time against those who were deemed the friends of the *Pope and the Pretender*.

The shrewd courtiers, aware of the design of their antagonists, and, either willing to sacrifice justice and humanity to their personal interest, or flattering themselves that the laws would be but of short duration, in the event of the success of their plan, unexpectedly gave into the measure, to remove the suspicion of their design. It was too late for the other party to recede; and thus, in time of profound peace, in violation of a solemn compact, sanctioned by the laws of nations, the Catholics of Ireland, like balls in a tennis-court, struck with the rackets of both parties, were thrown over the walls of the constitution of their country, against the original intention of the state gamesters.

If rulers and statesmen, long since resolved into their original dust, have handed down to us restraints and disqualifications as a legal inheritance, it is their fault and our misfortune, but not a reason which authorises those to whom the destinies have been more propitious, to aggravate our calamities by loading us with gross slander, and worse than degrading epithets, *venders of murders, and purchasers of felonies!* Neither is this an age for the triumph of overbearing contempt towards the descendants of the victims of the revolutions of former times, when Europe is threatened with a more extraordinary revolution than that which has reduced the Catholics of Ireland to their present situation.

Solomon

Solomon said, in his time, *nothing new under the Sun*. About a century and half ago, England's King was brought to the scaffold; her princes and nobles, and other loyalists, emigrants in France and other countries, where they were hospitably received, as the emigrants of those countries are now in their turn generously received in England, and in derision of the peerage, draymen were placed by an usurper, in that very house where your Lordships shine with such lustre.

Little it was expected, about a century ago, when a prince of the house of Orange was seated on the British Throne, after having placed a guard over James the Second, his father-in-law, in the palace of Hampton Court, that his successor in the Stadtholdership of Holland, dethroned by his rebellious subjects, would be under the necessity of taking up his residence in the very same palace where a King of England had been a kind of prisoner before: an awful instance of the vicissitudes of human affairs; which should inspire princes themselves with humanity and compassion for the oppressed—when they not only know that they are doomed to die as other mortals, but moreover exposed, from the inconstancy of fortune, to survive their power. *Go, said Marius, once the master of Rome, and conqueror of the Cimbri, go and tell the governor of Africa, that you have seen Marius perishing with hunger on the ruins of Carthage*, alluding to the instability of human grandeur, in the downfall of such a powerful state, and the change of his own fortune.

When we see kingdoms and empires fall, as it were, upon one another—when we see kings and queens, a few years back the idols of their subjects, eclipsing in splendor the pomp and magnificence of Oriental grandeur—when we see them

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bleeding on scaffolds, and their bodies deprived of those funeral rites which decency owes to humanity, we are convinced that uncertainty, inconstancy, and agitation, are the proper portions of all sublunary affairs; and that the greatest abuse of power is to triumph and insult over oppressed innocence.

The Catholic clergy of Ireland should not then be singled out as objects of defamation and invective, for having fallen victims to those reverses of fortune to which crowned heads, princes and nobles are exposed. In their poverty they have birth and honor, which neither revolutions nor penal laws can affect. No immoral man is ever allowed to officiate at their altars. When their prelates, who are ever watchful over the inferior clergy, discover any who depart from the line of duty required by the sanctity of their profession, they suspend or excommunicate them, and thus cut them off from the communion of the Catholic church.

The same laws that encouraged the son to disobey and strip the Catholic father of his property, encouraged the refractory clergyman to set the injunctions and admonitions of his bishop at defiance, by taking the oath of abjuration: for, as an encouragement to outward conformity, the laws of Ireland allow forty pounds a year to every priest who reads his recantation, whether he be a moral man or not.

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In a word, nothing whatever is required to become an elect of the state, but the outward utterance

utterance of the oath of abjuration, whether it is believed by the person who takes it, or whether it belies his heart. All the punishments and legal disqualifications are reserved for the retainers of conscious integrity, who sacrifice all wordly interests rather than swear against the dictates of their conscience, and thus do not choose to perjure themselves, and impose on their neighbours. In the very supposition that they err, (which is the supposition of others, not theirs) they err in their honesty; for no road can be right to the man who walks in it against conviction. And this circumstance alone is more than an ample refutation of the impious and hell-invented charge of a Catholic Priest selling absolutions for all sorts of crimes, felonies, and murders: for if there were priests who had such commodities for sale, and Catholics to purchase them, long before now the Catholic noblemen would have been seated in the House of Peers with your Lordships in legislating for the land.—Every obstacle would be soon removed; one single oath would be the panacea which would cure all disorders. We see ourselves excluded from all the dignities and places of emolument in the state. In consequence of this exclusion we see ourselves abused by the very dregs and lees of the peasantry of our country; such as Doctor Duignanane, the son of a peasant who had read his recantation to be schoolmaster to poor children in a charity school, now ranking with the senators in the land, and realizing in our days what Solomon complained of as one of the evils incident to human nature—*Another evil I have seen under the sun, I have seen servants or beggars on horses, and princes walking on the earth, or on foot, Ecclesiastes 10.* Not that I would reproach any man with the meanness of his

his birth, when I would see *Apollo crown modest merit*. But when a vulgar man, under the shield of penal laws, is continually insulting, in the grossest manner, the majority of an entire kingdom, as if they were a groupe of African slaves on a West India plantation, under the lash of a brutal driver—when, on the other hand, we are told in the most public manner, that we have dispensations and absolutions for the commission of *all sorts of crimes*, I feel such a conflict within myself, that I am obliged to summon up all my religion, lest I should yield to the temptation of hating a man I am bound to forgive. I am at a loss which to admire most of the two, either the power of conscience over the heart of man, or the unaccountable stupidity, the perverse and wilful blindness of any person who claims the slightest pretension to reason or good sense, and yet seriously thinks that unprincipled men, licensed by their religious principles, and authorized by their clergy to *commit all sorts of crimes*, could hesitate one instant to have recourse to so slight a remedy as an oath to remove every grievance, and silence every obloquy.

The feelings of honour, the pride of rank, the allurements of fortune and dignities, every impulse of the human heart, and all the motives that influence man as a member of society, call aloud on us to remove the disgraceful restraints that expose us to such humiliations and obloquy. And yet, with the remedy in our hands, the churches open, and *this pretended stock of absolutions*, which, according to the report of slander, would *sanctify all sorts of crimes*, we keep at a distance from the temple of fame, power, and splendor.

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When the Pagans accused the primitive Christians of *eating children at their religious assemblies, and rising after supper to conclude all in the confusion of incest*, Tertullian addressed his Apology to the Roman senate, and calls upon them to prove the truth of the fact. He appeals afterwards to the feelings of humanity, common to Pagans and Christians, whether such crimes could be the religion of any society of mortals. O, said he, *what immortal glory would a pro-consul gain, could he pull out a Christian by the ears, that had eat up an hundred children.* But we despair of any such glorious discovery.

I call aloud upon the Viceroy of Ireland, their Secretaries, and the Judges of the land, to name or to recollect one single instance in which a crime, murder or felony has been committed, in consequence of a priestly absolution. Where was the gallows erected, on the branches of which the *absolved murderer* and the *absolving priest* were suspended together—the one the perpetrator, the other the instigator of the crime? Or where is that nation on earth, even in times of Paganism, where the religion of the people authorized the *commission of all sorts of crimes*?

The Romans, who worshipped an adulterous Jupiter, yet punished adultery by the Julian law. The Senator who had offered incense to Bacchus could not abide his wife when he discovered that her breath was too fragrant with the flavour of the wine. The impure Venus was a goddess worshipped by the matrons of ancient Rome, yet Lucretia was chaste. The civil magistrate punished on earth the crimes that were worshipped in heaven. There exists then in the heart of man a law which points out to him, according to the Apostle, his moral duty—an innate principle of justice and goodness, by which, even in spite of the

the false maxims of his worship, the unregenerate Pagan condemned the immoral actions of himself and others.

The Catholics of Ireland, natives of a nation of heroes and an island of saints, are they to form the most singular of all exceptions to the maxims of nature, by not only sanctifying crimes, but by also making them a saleable commodity?

We who spend our time in enforcing the maxims of the Gospel, one of whose principal laws is a law of eternal love—who teach our flocks to relieve the distressed, without distinction of sects or countries, to return good for evil—to discover a brother in the face of an enemy—to embrace affliction—to smile under calamity—to pluck out the eye that gives offence—to cut off the hand that scandalizes—to renounce all the honours, riches, pleasures of this world, when they cannot be attained but at the risk of the soul, and to consider death in grace as a passage to a glorious and blissful eternity.

Are we such monsters as to be slaves to tenets so abhorrent to human nature?

I imagined, my Lords, that the solemn oaths and declarations of the Catholics of those kingdoms, and their renunciation of these privileges and rights, to which they would be otherwise entitled, rather than swear against their consciences, had sufficiently refuted accusations, at which nature recoils and shrinks with horror: but to our astonishment and surprise, our creed is not learned from ourselves. More credit is given to a fanatical geographer called Guthrie, than to our oaths, or the writings of our doctors. In this theological sum, our divinity is chiefly studied, and Guthrie informs his readers, that he has extracted from a book
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called—*Rome, the Great Custom House of Sin, translated into English, 150 years ago, the fees of the Pope's Chancery for absolutions*. He might have said, instead of *translated into English, composed in English* originally. I never read such a book in the canon law, nor such fees amongst the rules of the Pope's Chancery; however, he classes the fees in the following order*.

For him who stole consecrated things in a holy place, ten shillings and six-pence.

For him who lays with a woman in a church, nine shillings.

For him that killeth father, mother, wife or sister, ten shillings.

For him that layeth with his mother, sister, or grandmother, seven shillings and six-pence.

This is the cheapest bargain a *pious* customer could expect, and I think there is good profit in dealing with the Pope, as a great number of other sins are not taxed at all, such as *sleeping with a neighbour's wife, stealing a fat ox, &c.* These are only as a few grains thrown into the scale, when a person buys some pounds of sugar in a grocer's shop. They are but peccadillos or trifles. It appears, however, that the Popes are but bad financiers in not increasing the custom house duties in the space of 150 years, whereas every article costs now treble what it cost then; but especially, as things rise in value, according to their rarity, the Popes custom rates were ill regulated in not charging sixpence or a shilling more for the *grandmother* than for the sister or granddaughter, as most certainly an old *Hebe*, the *grandmother of the graces*, is a greater rarity than a young

* Guthrie's Geographical Grammar, sixteenth edition, corrected and enlarged. London, printed : 796.

the false maxims of his worship, the unregenerate Pagan condemned the immoral actions of himself and others.

The Catholics of Ireland, natives of a nation of heroes and an island of saints, are they to form the most singular of all exceptions to the maxims of nature, by not only sanctifying crimes, but by also making them a saleable commodity?

We who spend our time in enforcing the maxims of the Gospel, one of whose principal laws is a law of eternal love—who teach our flocks to relieve the distressed, without distinction of sects or countries, to return good for evil—to discover a brother in the face of an enemy—to embrace affliction—to smile under calamity—to pluck out the eye that gives offence—to cut off the hand that scandalizes—to renounce all the honours, riches, pleasures of this world, when they cannot be attained but at the risk of the soul, and to consider death in grace as a passage to a glorious and blissful eternity.

Are we such monsters as to be slaves to tenets so abhorrent to human nature?

I imagined, my Lords, that the solemn oaths and declarations of the Catholics of those kingdoms, and their renunciation of these privileges and rights, to which they would be otherwise entitled, rather than swear against their consciences, had sufficiently refuted accusations, at which nature recoils and shrinks with horror: but to our astonishment and surprise, our creed is not learned from ourselves. More credit is given to a fanatical geographer called Guthrie, than to our oaths, or the writings of our doctors. In this theological sum, our divinity is chiefly studied, and Guthrie informs his readers, that he has extracted from a book
called

called—*Rome, the Great Custom House of Sin, translated into English, 150 years ago, the fees of the Pope's Chancery for absolutions.* He might have said, instead of *translated into English, composed in English* originally. I never read such a book in the canon law, nor such fees amongst the rules of the Pope's Chancery; however, he classes the fees in the following order*.

For him who stole consecrated things in a holy place, ten shillings and six-pence.

For him who lays with a woman in a church, nine shillings.

For him that killeth father, mother, wife or sister, ten shillings.

For him that layeth with his mother, sister, or grandmother, seven shillings and six-pence.

This is the cheapest bargain a pious customer could expect, and I think there is good profit in dealing with the Pope, as a great number of other sins are not taxed at all, such as *sleeping with a neighbour's wife, stealing a fat ox, &c.* These are only as a few grains thrown into the scale, when a person buys some pounds of sugar in a grocer's shop. They are but peccadillos or trifles. It appears, however, that the Popes are but bad financiers in not increasing the custom house duties in the space of 150 years, whereas every article costs now treble what it cost then; but especially, as things rise in value, according to their rarity, the Popes custom rates were ill regulated in not charging sixpence or a shilling more for the *grandmother* than for the sister or granddaughter, as most certainly an old *Hebe*, the *grandmother of the graces*, is a greater rarity than a young

* Guthrie's Geographical Grammar, sixteenth edition, corrected and enlarged. London, printed 1796.

young woman or grand-daughter. In vain should we attempt to disclaim this ludicrous and impious creed. The public are so accustomed to slander and misrepresentation, that few will believe us.

The Rules of the Roman Chancery, *Regulæ Cancellariæ*, regard benefices, the temporalities of vacant bishoprics, and other ecclesiastical matters, partly spiritual, partly temporal, according to concordatums or stipulations between the Apostolical See, and Catholic Princes. The incests and sacrileges above-mentioned, instead of being compounded for money, would be punished with death on the rack or wheel, after making the *amenæ honorable*, with a lighted taper held by the criminal, on his knees before the door of the church where the sacrilege had been committed. Sixtus Quintus condemned to the gallies, for the space of five years, a nobleman for raising the veil of a lady whom he met in the street, and giving her a kiss. And in vain did a polygamist plead that he was unfortunate in each of his wives, and for that reason changed them, in expectation of finding one that would please him.

As it is so hard to please you in this world, replied the stern Pontiff, *there are more women in the other world, you must go there to find one to your liking*—ordered him to be tried and executed.

Thus, if Rome be the great custom-house of sins, a London printer's office is the great custom-house of false creeds and fictitious absolutions, for real absolutions can never be granted but upon sincere repentance, which requires three indispensable conditions: *a sincere sorrow for past sins, a firm resolution to guard against future lapses, and every atonement in our power to the injured Deity and the injured neighbour.* Without these conditions, ab-
solutions

solutions are no more than the mutterings of sorcerers, or words of incantation pronounced over a dead body, without ever imparting to it the genial heat of animation and vitality. The ministers of religion can do no more than God has annexed to their commissions; and the Scriptures declare, that God will never forgive the sinner without sorrow and repentance, which implies a purpose of amendment for life.

Sacramental confession then, and *priestly absolution*, instead of being an encouragement to sin, are in the Catholic religion the greatest restraints on the passions. The worst and most immoral Catholics are those who neglect them, because they prefer their passions to their duty. And if it be asked, *why have recourse to those religious rites, whereas people may sin afterwards?*

The reason is: because man in this life is not impeccable, on account of the changeableness and inconstancy of his will. All he can do is to form the strongest resolutions, to lay hold on the means, which in his belief, God has appointed for his sanctification, and to recommend himself to infinite mercy. Hence the caution given by the Apostle, *Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.*

God has promised to receive the sinner whenever he would return, without limiting the number of times. Yet to sin in expectation of forgiveness, would be the most unjustifiable presumption.—Mercy is not to be abused, nor is Divine Justice to be provoked by new prevarications and new crimes. For there are times when the measure is filled up, and fatal limits, beyond which paternal goodness does not extend.

Were *priestly absolution*, which is founded on the power granted by Christ to remit sins to the penitent

penitent sinner, a licence for guilt, it would be unjust to charge it on the Catholics alone—Lutherans, Greeks, Armenians, all branches of the Christian religion, except Calvinists, and the modern sectaries sprung from that stock, acknowledge this power. The Church of England, in her liturgy, recommends, acknowledges it, and lays down the form of absolution in the very same words used by the Roman Catholic Church. The laws of the state sanction the inviolable secrecy which is observed, when the sinner, loaded with guilt, lays open his hidden sores to his spiritual physician; whereas the laws do not allow that what is told in confession should be adduced in evidence on a trial: and by a statute passed in the reign of James I. the minister is degraded for ever, if he reveals the confession of his penitent. But the ill-fated Catholic is the expiatory victim on whose head all the iniquities of the nation are laid; and, what is harmless in others, is criminal in him*.

It is painful in me, my Lords, thus to intrude on your time. It is the more painful, as after so many proofs of the loyalty, the piety, the zeal and exertions of the Catholic prelates and pastors of Ireland, in the critical circumstances, when there was no room for dissimulation, or a trimming, fluctuating conduct, threats should be held out for the abolition of their priesthood, as the nursery of *crimes, felonies and murders*.

In

* I do not write in this address as a controvertist, or polemical divine; I only expound the Catholic belief, so often and so grossly misrepresented, and whose ministers are exposed to obloquy on account of pretended *absolution*.

The primitive fathers, in addressing their apologies to a pagan senate, explained their belief, to vindicate it from misrepresentation. I have every confidence that a Christian Senate will not be less indulgent to a Christian Clergyman.

In addition to these threats, by a man of consequence, on the eve of a union which they imagined was to close the penal code with the sevenfold seal of eternal silence; and at the very threshold of the Temple of Concord, they and their flocks are justly alarmed to see the pages of the mysterious book, in which, like that mentioned by the Prophet, are written so many *lamentations and woes*, unfolded by a member of the British House of Commons, for the purpose of knowing whether there be any more penal clauses wanting, in order to make up the deficiency, by enacting a new law which hereafter may affect their children and relatives. I mean, my Lords, Sir Henry Mildmay's bill, relative to what is called *Monastic Institutions*.

From a coincidence of circumstances it seems to appear, that the idea has been suggested to that gentleman, in consequence of a very uninteresting dispute between two very learned, and in all other respects very amiable ecclesiastics, Doctor Sturges, a prebendary of Winchester, and Doctor Milner, a Catholic historian, and member of the Society of Antiquarians, about Bishop Hoadley's writings.

Mr. Milner has published a very learned and curious history of Winchester, under the successive dynasties of British, Saxon, and English kings, from the earliest records of time, down to our days. As an antiquarian, he describes the monuments of worthies buried in the Cathedral; as a historian he draws their characters. It is too voluminous to be read by any but by a few rich, who can purchase it. It is out of the reach of the generality of the English nation, who would be more pleased with Fielding's Tom Jones, or Jonathan Wild: though it for ever ranks Mr. Milner in the first class of the literary characters of the

the age, and should rather procure him the thanks of the inhabitants of Winchester, for having rescued the history of their city from the mist and rubbish of antiquity, and given such elegant engravings of their monuments, than the animadversions of some of its ecclesiastical dignitaries.

Unfortunately for some English ladies, who, in their early days, had made vows of celibacy in France and Flanders, and had taken refuge in their native land, from the poniards and guillotines of French assassins, the antiquarian, after describing the monuments of several illustrious men in succession, came to that of Bishop Hoadley. This prelate, to the exception of his moral character, which was spotless, might have been called the Perigord or Gregoire of his time, with regard to his theological principles in ecclesiastical matters, submitting religion to the civil magistrates, &c. A representation was drawn up against him, and his writings, by the lower House of Convocation in 1717, as *tending to subvert all government and discipline in the church of Christ, and to reduce it to a state of anarchy and confusion: and as making void those powers with which he himself was vested, and which he was bound to exercise in conferring orders, inflicting censures, &c.*

The ministry of the day, with whom Bishop Hoadley was a favourite, dissolved the Convocation, prevented the representation from being carried to the Bishops in the higher house, and thus dispersed the clouds that were thickening over Bishop Hoadley's head.

In describing his monument, as an antiquarian, it was natural for Mr. Milner to draw the prelate's character as a historian; and to represent him in an attitude analogous to his principles, with the Bible in one hand, and Magna Charta in the other; the

the mitre and the cap of liberty in contact; the crozier and the pike set in saltire, or crossing each other. Mr. Milner complaining that one of the pillars of the cathedral of Winchester, was cut too great a depth to make place for Bishop Hoadley's monument, adds, *Thus Bishop Hoadley, both living and dead, undermined the church of which he had been a prelate**.

Doctor Sturges as he himself acknowledges, had been under particular obligations to Bishop Hoadley, and in all appearance had imbibed, if not all, at least the best of his opinions. Gratitude and friendship, two of the human virtues the most congenial to our feelings as men, but often hurrying us into *excesses which we cannot canonize as Christians*, warmed Dr. Sturges' breast in such a manner, that he imparted a congenial heat to the embers of the dead, and reproduced on the stage a character, who, notwithstanding the change of scenes, will ever and invariably play the same part, which is to confuse and perplex, to have friends and foes, and to leave the following problem to solve: *Whether he was really and in his heart, a professor of the thirty-nine articles*, one of which determines with the Catholic church, the institution of bishops, *jure divino*? Or whether he was one of those accommodating sages, who like the philosopher of old, laid down as a rule, that a wise man should have two religions, one for himself, and another for the country and time in which he lives? The solution of this problem, I leave to Doctor Sturges and Mr. Milner.

It is a problem, the solution whereof concerns no more the present generation than the religion of

3 Milner's Survey of Winchester.

of Grotius, on which the famous Bossuet has written a dissertation.

Few persons read Hoadley, whose style is so incoherent and unentertaining, that Pope, in an allusion to the length of his periods, said *Hoadley walks a mile*. To it can be applied the remark of a Roman Emperor on the style of Seneca: "*arena sine calce*, sand without cement." Doctor Sturges, however, took offence at the character Mr. Milner had drawn of his favourite bishop, and instead of confining himself in point to the dispute, adopted the most effectual method of rallying round his standard a host of confederates, by making a general cause of it, and publishing a work under the title of *Reflections on Popery*; a theme so often enlarged on pro and con by the most eminent men the world has ever produced, that it is impossible to say any thing new on the subject.

Mr. Milner, as an historian, depicted the eminent men of religious orders, who had reflected lustre on the church of Winchester, in the same colours that any impartial Protestant historian would have done, as several of them have. He does the same justice to such of the Protestant Bishops of Winchester, as deserved to have their birth, education, learning and virtues celebrated.

Doctor Sturges, inattentive to the labours and learning of the members of religious orders, who have preserved the literary monuments of ancient times from the ravages of Goths and Vandals—followed the sun in its course in converting barbarous nations—carried the light of the Gospel into those distant climes unknown to the conquerors of the ancient and new world—brought Europe acquainted with the natural productions, the laws, the manners, customs, religions, and geography

graphy of the remotest regions, and enriched the republic of letters with the treasures of literature both ancient and modern. He overlooks the benefits they have conferred on the world, in their fasts and celibacy, which he attacks with as much vehemence and zeal as Salvian attacks the vices and disorders of his time.

The prayers, mortification, penance of monastic institutions, all must yield with Doctor Sturges to the *irresistible impulse of nature*. *The impulse of nature*—the source of all our disorders and miseries, which all legislators on earth made it their constant study to restrain by laws and punishments. What made an adulterer of David? *The impulse of nature*.—An incestuous of Amnon? *The impulse of nature*.—A rebel of Absalom? *The impulse of nature*.—A murderer of Cain? *The impulse of nature*.—What gives employment to the canonists and civilians of Doctors Commons, in arguing the cases of divorce? *The impulse of nature*.—What peoples London with so many votaries of the Cyprian Goddess? *The impulse of nature*.—What is it that brought the impure spirit into the body of that man, concerning whom our Saviour said, there is a kind of devil which can not be cast out, but by prayer and fasting? *The impulse of nature*.—His zeal against celibacy, and mortification, hurries him into such extremes that he blames Mr. Milner for being so lavish in his encomiums on the Protestant Bishops of Winchester, the most distinguished for their virtues, though Mr. Milner quotes their monumental inscriptions, recorded by Protestant authors, such as Bishop Andrews, who lived in a state of celibacy. *Celebs hinc, migravit ad aurlolam celestem*, and Bishop Morley, amongst whose many virtues is reckoned the austerity of his life, eating but

once

once in twenty-four hours, and rising every morning in the coldest weather and without a fire, at five o'clock.

He is never more eloquent, than when he declaims against fast and celibacy. In support of his arguments against celibacy, he quotes Lucretius, an Epicurean poet and philosopher, who invokes Venus, the goddess of lust; and Walter de Mapes, an unchaste *bon vivant*, who wrote doggerel verses in latin in the twelfth century.

Meum est propositum in taberna mori:
Vinum fit appositum morientis ori*.

They are certainly the best authorities he could quote against virginal chastity, and the mortification of the senses. For he could not quote Saint Paul or the fathers, against either one or the other. If Saint Jerome were living, he would write an epistle to Doctor Sturges with the same warmth, with which he wrote to Vigilantius.

The Doctor has reserved Bishop Hoadley's apology for an appendix, in which he makes use of words, which, from Mr. Milner or me, would render us obnoxious to the Bishops of both persuasions.

They are the following:—*As an Ecclesiastic, he (Bishop Hoadley) withstood the high pretensions of great part of the Clergy—pretensions unauthorised by reason, maintained by a violent party spirit, and often employed in the most tumultuary and factious purposes to which the cry of the church was made subservient.* This cry, which he does not seem to approve in the hierarchy, soon became the cry of some of the prebendaries of Winchester, and from them the cry of the public papers.

On

* Others are of opinion, that de Mapes is not the author.

On Mr. Milner's reply, in which there is a dissertation on Bishop Hoadley's principles and writings, letters were written, and deputations sent to some Members of Parliament. Sir Henry Mildmay brings in a Bill for the suppression of *Monastic Institutions*, the very words of Doctor Sturges. One would imagine that there was a kind of confederacy amongst some of the editors of the public papers to ring the alarm. Not a single paragraph could I have seen in any of them in contradiction to exaggerated falsehoods. *Two thousand of the common people, chiefly servant maids, were converted by the French Clergy in one part of London, in the space of two years; that is to say, more than all the Catholic Clergy of England have converted since the reign of Elizabeth.*

The French clergy, mostly half starved and half naked poor people, in spite of the generosity of government, on account of the smallness of their allowance, and the dearth of provisions, are ill qualified for making converts. They sleep five or six, or by trios, in poor places that cannot afford to have servant maids; they do not know English,—servant maids do not know French. These poor priests make their own beds, and cook their own soup and vegetables. I have preached in the chapels in London near twelve years, and I have not reconciled one single servant maid to the Catholic church. More of them are debauched in London in one month, than will be converted in ten thousand years. It were much better they were converted than cast on the town: and little would the state suffer if a London cinder-woman embraced the religion of so many empresses and queens.

Popery is increasing in the diocese of Chester, said another, where forty thousand three hundred and thirty-three persons never go to any religious worship. But Popery increases under the influence of fifty thousand Priests, all men of talents. That is to say, more Priests than all the Bishops of Europe have ordained in twenty years. Such are the methods used to prepare the way for the operation of a bill which has for its object a restraint on the freedom of the will of a Catholic woman, who perhaps, if she lived in the world would bring scandal on her family.

There cannot, my Lords, be any *monastic institutions* in England under the existing laws, if there were as many women who would live in celibacy as there are bad women in London. For a *monastic institution requires a monastery endowed*, and the sanction of the laws of the state to render the vows of the religious irrevocable; as in Catholic countries, where, if a priest marries, or a religious deserts his cloister, he is punished by the civil magistrate, or sent back to his superior to be punished as an apostate. Hence, when the monastic institutions were dissolved in England, the vow of celibacy still remained. And Henry the Eighth, who sent the Lady Abbess's gold cross to the mint, would have doomed her body to the faggot or halter, had he perceived the bridal ring on her finger.

The Legislature of 91 made this distinction in the toleration granted to the Catholics: *it removed the penalties which attached to those who would enter into any ecclesiastical community of the church of Rome, but not to extend to monastic institutions*: that is to say, not to endow monasteries, or incorporate their rules, such as they are in Catholic countries, with the laws of the state, where they

they are never to marry, nor return to the world: whereas here they are at liberty to renounce their vows when they think fit, and sue for their share of their family inheritance, not being here as elsewhere, *dead in law*. What are then the few English nuns now in England, or the few Irish nuns in Ireland, for no ladies of any other country devote themselves there to a religious life? What are they in the eyes of the law? What are they in the eyes of any man who pays the slightest attention to the subject? *A few Catholic females, who, from devotion, form a resolution to die old maids, and, when tired of celibacy, can marry in spite of Pope or Bishop*, as there are some clergymen in this kingdom and in Ireland, who, after officiating at Catholic altars, have taken wives to themselves, and exchanged the sacerdotal cincture for the cestus of Venus.

If these ladies were ladies of pleasure, seducing youth; the gentlemen of Winchester would not give themselves the slightest concern about them. They are of the greatest use to the Catholic nobility and gentry, who send their daughters to be educated by them, on account of the strictness of their morals, their seclusion from the dissipations of the world, which affords them the more time to superintend the instruction of their scholars, and the facility of observing the spiritual exercises peculiar to the Catholic religion, such as fasts, abstinence, confessions, communications, &c. which could not be observed at other boarding schools; and which, though they may appear ridiculous to others, are held sacred by us. In Galway, in Ireland, there are ladies of this description, since the conversion of the kingdom to Christianity in the fourth century. The parliament, however, rigorous in angry times,

times, never molested them, on account of their utility; by their instructions, besides the policy of spending their money in the country. For if there were not ladies of this description in the country, the Catholics would send their daughters to be educated abroad.

But the nuns of this country, pervert the children of Protestants, and the French Clergy make converts.

Every enquiry has been made, and the challenge given to prove the allegation. The enquiry proved fruitless, and the challenge refused. Upon enquiry it was found, that a Scotch lady and gentleman, going to some distant part, left their child in the care of these religious women, until their return. They could not have left her in better hands; for some of these ladies make a vow to attend the sick, without distinction between Turk and Christian. Parents have a right to leave their children where they think fit. They take no Protestant boarders or scholars. They had at their school two young misses, whose father was a Catholic, and the mother a Protestant. A father has a natural right over his children. For this reason we never baptize the children of Quakers or Jews, without the consent of their fathers. If they were dying, beyond hope of recovery, we would not scruple to baptize, for death emancipates them. The father, whose name was Counsellor Sheridan, died last year: the mother took the children from Winchester, and sent them to a Protestant boarding-school. It was also found upon enquiry, that an Irish regiment, in which there are a great many Catholic soldiers, was quartered at Winchester. By an act of the Irish Legislature, the Catholics of Ireland can enter into the
army,

army, and make an open profession of their faith, and perform their religious worship. A brave man, who exposes his life for his king and country, is entitled to the privilege of saying his prayers. The Abbot of Saint Gall, a Dominican Friar, and Sovereign Prince, has Calvinist regiments, and Calvinist chaplains in his service; and as there are such numbers of Irish Catholics in his Majesty's armies, but especially in the navy, an edifying Catholic chaplain would contribute greatly to prevent amongst them the contagion of immorality and Jacobinism. For when they do not practise their own religion, they will practise no other. Upon those principles, a very worthy French clergyman, who has acquired some smattering of English, instilled into the minds of those Catholic soldiers the principles of loyalty, morality, and good order. And such, my Lords, is the ground of all this clamour about *Nuns, Conversions, and Popery!*

As to conversions—one Catholic lady, of an edifying life and amiable manners in the world, would make more converts than ten thousand cloisters. And of all religions on earth the Catholic religion is the least calculated for making converts in these kingdoms, on account of the severity of its rules. It is not such an easy matter to prevail on a voluptuary to fast and pray; or a libertine to renounce his criminal pleasures; or a usurer, and others accustomed to accumulate a fortune by unlawful means, to make restitution of ill-acquired gain; or a married man, who has an unfaithful wife, to live as chaste as a vestal in a cloister, until he buries or takes her back to his bosom. These and other sacrifices must be made, after being instructed in every essential point of the Catholic doctrine. All the

sins which the new convert can recollect must be told in the tribunal of penance, where the concealment of one would be a sacrilege.

Let the sectaries who daily spring up preach this doctrine—their meeting houses will be deserted. It is an easy matter to work on the imagination, and to pass from one belief to another, when a person has no fixed standard or rule: but to change the heart, to triumph over the passions, to hate whatever we loved before, to love what we hated, is not a change so easily wrought. Let not then the church of England, or the Prebendaries of Winchester, be alarmed with the number of conversions made by nuns, or Catholic missionaries—we have more than enough to do, in keeping our own flocks attentive to their duty. And unfortunately with regard to several of them, we can say with the prophet, *In vain have I laboured*. Tom Paine has made more converts in the three kingdoms in three years, than the Catholic clergy will make in twenty thousand.

It would be happy for the kingdom if we could convert all the infidels and fanatics that separate every day from the established religion, and who, if an opportunity offered, would bury it with the state in its ruins, as in Cromwell's time. In one place of worship Christ is expunged out of their creed. In another, the Father and Holy Ghost are denied, and Christ is all—the Father and Holy Ghost are but his attributes. The Catholic priest, who believes more of the Thirty-nine Articles, than all the sectaries in England, is doomed by law to death, if he makes of a Quaker a child of the covenant by baptism; or prevails on an infidel to pray to Christ who died for him. *If the Tiber overflows its banks, if the Nile sinks below its usual level, if the plague destroys, if famine devours,*
said

said Tertullian, *the cry is, To the lions with the Christians* *.—The Catholic is the only obnoxious being.

Ireland, my Lords, this instant resembles a sea agitated after a violent storm. The most distant idea of the slightest penalty on the score of conscience, must alarm the Catholics of that kingdom; and give an opportunity to others to represent to them, that the British Parliament closing with a new penal law, is but the scene of a tragedy in which one act leads to another more distressing; that is to say, that this is but a preliminary to some other law more oppressive, when the Imperial Parliament meets, and themselves are friendless on a distant shore; whereas, if in the Irish Parliament there were members hostile to their interests, there were others who pleaded their cause; and thus, instead of an enlargement of privileges, they will have nothing to expect but an extension of penalties; such will be the language of the enemies to the Union.

I know not, my Lords, whether this paper will fall into your hands before the Bill is disposed of. If it be already passed into a law, I disclaim any intention whatever to censure the proceedings of the Legislature of the land, but shall as in duty bound, submit to its decisions. But if it be pending before the house, self-defence will, I hope, justify me in deprecating what I think obnoxious, and will answer, in my opinion, no end but that of creating distrust and despondency.

In an age of profligacy, when so many wise and virtuous Members of the Legislature, intended to introduce a new law for the security of the marriage bed; when divorces, instead of *constant affection*, are the frequent fruits of matrimony; amidst so many seminaries of lewdness, and cities become,

become, on account of vice and corruption, so many criminal Ninivites, which would require a Jonas to induce them to repent in sackcloth and ashes; streets infested with lewd females from the age of eleven to the period at which the effects of a crime that carries with it its own punishment, and the enormous number of which wretches, a magistrate who has written a book on the Police of London, computes at fifty thousand annually! Amidst such scenes of vice, is the chastity of a few Catholic women an object of so alarming a nature, as to deserve the attention of the first Senate on earth, especially as it is in their power to renounce their state of celibacy when they chuse? Perhaps not two hundred of them would bind themselves to a single life, in the space of fifty years. If their number were multiplied to ten times, or to a thousand times more, what are they when compared to the great number of the immoral and unchaste all over England? About twenty or thirty atoms floating on the surface of an immense ocean. *Rari nantes ingurgite vasto.*

Were it the custom amongst Quakers, Anabaptists, Moravians, or any other sect or description of people, to have women of a solitary cast or disposition of mind amongst them, who from fanaticism or inclination, would chuse to lead a retired life, and superintend the education of the females of their sects, Sir Henry Mildmay would rather admire than molest them. Why then harass, perplex, expose to the insults of domiciliary visits, persons of the Catholic persuasion? Why, amongst such a variety of sects, single the Catholics out as objects of persecution? There are now no Catholic Pretenders to the Throne; when there were, not one of the Catholics of Ireland joined them, although they raised the standard twice in Scotland, to assert their claim to the
British

British Empire. The Pope from a temporal Prince, is reduced to his primitive state of a pious and edifying Bishop; when he was powerfully armed with Peter's keys in one hand, and Paul's sword in the other; when, in consequence of temporal claims, such as Peter's-pence, &c. the gifts of former Kings, he exercised an authority which seemed to encroach upon the civil power; the Catholics of these kingdoms adhered to their allegiance, and repaired to the banners of their Sovereign. All former pretexts for persecution being done away, what cause is there for persecuting us now? It must be this pretended creed which fanaticism or prejudice has fathered, and which our hearts and actions disclaim, *Priests selling absolutions for all sorts of crimes*, and millions of Catholics deprived of their civil rights on the score of conscience buying them. For where there is no purchase, there is no sale.

Are we not Adam's children? Have not the Catholics, the same sensations of pain and pleasure as other men? Their vices and virtues do not they run in the same channel with those of their Protestant neighbours? Are they not animated with the same desire of glory—allured by the blandishments of pleasure—courted by the charms of riches—as earnestly inclined to the enjoyment of ease and opulence? If perjury be their creed, if their clergy be endued with the magic power of sanctifying crimes, and waiving their flocks to heaven on the wings of unrepented guilt, why do not they glide down the stream of legal liberty, instead of stemming the torrent of oppression? Why do not they qualify themselves for sitting in the Senate, and giving laws to the land, in concert with their countrymen, instead of being the continual objects of penal statutes.

It

It is that they are diametrically the reverse of what they are represented. Their religion forbids them to sport with the awful name of the Divinity. They do not choose to impose on their neighbours or themselves by perjury. Were it otherwise—were their consciences of a more ductile texture, in three weeks or a month's time they would all read their recantations, and be on a level with the rest of their fellow subjects. Yet the archives of national justice can prove, that the Catholics of Ireland reduced to the necessity of discovering against themselves, preferred the loss of their estates, to the guilt of perjury, when a false oath could have secured them in their property. Notwithstanding this imputed creed, they prefer the smarting afflictions of the body to the stinging remorse of the soul; and when worldly prosperities stand in competition with conscience, *they rather choose to be its martyrs than executioners.*

I have the honour to be, &c.

ARTHUR O'LEARY.

No. 46, Half-moon Street, Piccadilly,
June 30, 1800.

POSTSCRIPT.

As an additional refutation of the invidious report of conversions by the French clergy, it is to be remarked, that the Apostolical Vicars do not permit them to hear the confessions or direct the consciences of the Catholics of these kingdoms, though numbers of them know the French.

It is further to be remarked, that domiciliary visits permitted to be made by magistrates, to ladies secluded from the world, must wound their feelings in the most grievous manner, but if permitted at the discretion of magistrates to be made in the *night-time*, they most humbly supplicate to be sent back to be slaughtered by their merciless enemies, who martyred the ladies of the Abbey of St. Dennis.

Some words in the public papers, attributed to a Member of the House of Commons, who had said to Mr. Windham, *that one would imagine he was revelling in the pleasures of a nunnery*, must equally excite their alarms, and hurt their delicacy.

SUPPLEMENT.

Rev. ARTHUR O'LEARY'S Letter to the Printer of an
English Newspaper.

" SIR,

London, 5th June, 1790.

" A CONFUSION of names gave rise some months ago to a mistake, copied from the *Dublin Evening Post* into the *Bath Chronicle*, and other papers of this kingdom, viz. 'That I have read my recantation in St. Werburgh's Church in *Dublin*.' Thus a mistake has changed me into a conformist, though I never changed my creed.

" If in reality the tenets of my church were such as prejudice and ignorance proclaim them; if they taught me that a papal dispensation could sanctify guilt, sanction conspiracies, murders, the extirpation of my fellow-creatures, on account of difference in religious opinions, perjury, to promote the Catholic cause by pious breaches of allegiance to Protestant kings, or rebellion against their Government.

" If it were an article of my belief, that a priestly absolution, without sorrow for my sins, or resolution of amendment, has the power of a charm to reclaim me to the state of unoffending infancy, and enable me, like *Milton's* devil, to leap from the gulph of sin into paradise, without purifying my heart, or changing my affections;—if it were an article of my faith, that the grace of an indulgence could give me the extraordinary privilege of sinning without guilt, and offending without punishment; if it inculcated any maxim ever sive of moral rectitude;—in a word, if the features of my religion correspond with the pictures drawn of it in flying pamphlets and anniversary declamations, I would consider myself and the rest of my fraternity, as downright idiots, wickedly stupid, to remain one hour in a state which deprived us of our rights of citizens; whereas such an accommodating scheme would make them not only attainable but certain.

" Your correspondent does me the honour to rank me with Lord *Dunboyne*, formerly titular Bishop of *Cork*,
and

and Mr. *Kirwan*. If they have changed their religion from a thorough conviction of its falsehood, they have done well. It is the duty of every sincere inquirer after truth, to comply with the immediate dictates of his conscience, in embracing that religion which he believed to be the most acceptable to the Almighty. Deplorable indeed must be the state of a man who lives in wilful error: For however an all-wise God may hereafter dispose of those who err in their honesty, and whose error is involuntary and invincible, sure no road can be right to the wretch, who walks in or takes it against conviction. A thorough conviction then, that I am in the right road to eternal life, (if my moral conduct corresponds with my speculative belief) keeps me within the pale of my church, in direct opposition to my temporal interest.—And no Protestant nobleman or gentleman of my acquaintance disesteems me the more for adhering to my creed, knowing that a Catholic, and an honest man, are not contradictory terms.

“ I do not consider Lord *Dunboyne* as a model after whom I should copy. With his silver locks, and at an age when persons, who had devoted themselves to the service of the altar in their early days, should, like the Emperor Charles the V. rather think of their coffin than their nuptial bed, this prelate married a young woman. Whether then the glowing love of truth or Hymen’s torch, induced him to change the Roman pontifical for the book of common prayer, and the psalms he and I often sung together, for a bridal hymn, his own conscience is the best to determine. Certain however it is, that if the charms of the fair sex can captivate an old Bishop to such a degree, as to induce him to renounce his breviary, similar motives, and the prospect of aggrandizement, may induce a young ecclesiastic to change his cassock.

“ Having from my early days accustomed myself to get the mastery over ambition and love, the two passions which in every age have enslaved the greatest heroes, your correspondent may rest assured that I am not one of the trio mentioned in his letter.

“ I have the honour to be, &c.

“ ARTHUR O’LEARY.”

